

at risk. He told them he would rather lose an election than see his country lose a war. That is the kind of courage and vision we need in our next Commander in Chief.

My fellow citizens, we live in a dangerous world, and we need a President who understands the lessons of September the 11th, 2001: that to protect America, we must stay on the offense, stop attacks before they happen, and not wait to be hit again. The man we need is John McCain.

When he takes office next January, John will have an outstanding leader at his side. America will have a strong and principled Vice President in the Governor of the great State of Alaska, Sarah Palin.

In the time the Oval Office has been in my trust, I've kept near my desk reminders of America's character, including a painting of a west Texas mountain lit by the morning sun. It reminds me that Americans have always lived on the sunrise side of the mountain. We are a nation that looks to the new day with confidence and optimism. And I'm optimistic about our future because I believe in the goodness and wisdom of the American people. I am optimistic because I have faith in freedom's power to lift up all of God's children and lead this world to a future of peace.

And I'm optimistic about something else: When the debates have ended, and all the ads have run, and it is time to vote, Americans will look closely at the judgment, the experience, and the policies of the candidates, and they will cast their ballots for the McCain-Palin ticket.

While I am not with you in the Twin Cities on this wonderful night for our party, with Laura Bush speaking, you have clearly traded up. *[Laughter]* I am so proud the American people have come to know her gracious presence, her determined spirit, and her loving heart. Laura has been a fantastic First Lady.

Thank you, Laura. And thanks to all of you in the hall tonight. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 9:54 p.m. from the Cross Hall at the White House to convention participants in St. Paul, MN. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Riley of Alabama; Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; and Gov. Rick Perry of Texas. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Briefing at the Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

September 3, 2008

I'm going to make a quick statement, then I want to come around and say thank you in person to you.

First of all, Governor, thanks for having me down here. Phase one of the response to Gustav went very well. A lot of it had to do with the people in this room. We're much better coordinated this time than we were with Katrina. The State government, the local government, and the Federal Government were able to work effectively together.

There is still more work to be done. One of the key things that needs to happen is they got to get electricity up here in Louisiana, get moving as fast as possible. The Governor understands it's a problem, his team understands it's a problem, and I understand it's a problem.

There's a lot of folks from this State that are working hard to restring the lines. There are people from out of State coming into Louisiana to help as well, and of course, all the citizens of this State want to thank the people from other States that are moving in here to help get the electricity up as soon as possible. And I would ask that if utilities in neighboring States have extra manpower, please coordinate with the State and send the folks in. Part of this recovery is going to require the electricity coming back as quickly as possible.

We talked about the need to make sure that in parts of Louisiana that are getting flooded now—rural Louisiana—that MREs and water and ice get delivered to those communities as quickly as possible.

As a Governor of a neighboring State, I remember often how people would say, “All they care about is the big cities.” And I understand there’s a lot of focus on New Orleans, and there should be focus on New Orleans. But in the briefings today, it is clear that this State is focused as well as on people who live in rural Louisiana and in the smaller towns of Louisiana. And so the efforts will be aimed at helping people there.

Bobby talked about the need for—to release energy or oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Last night we got a request from a company doing business here in Louisiana, and we met that request. And if—so oil was released from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And we will continue to do that upon requests by companies.

All in all, the response has been excellent, but the people here understand that there is more work to be done. And that’s why I came down here with members of the Federal Government to listen and to figure out how to help.

I can’t thank you all enough for working as hard as you are. Looking around, I can see that some people may not have had much sleep recently. [*Laughter*] The people of your State care a lot about the fact that you are working as hard as you are. And if this helps you keep going, I want to thank you, and I want to thank all the volunteers and the faith-based community that always rises up in a challenge like this. They listen to that universal call to love a neighbor like you’d like to be loved yourself. And that’s happening here in Louisiana again. And I know the people that are—whose lives have been affected appreciate a total stranger coming in to help.

And finally, the people in Louisiana must know that all across our country there’s a lot of prayer, prayer for those whose lives have been turned upside down. And I’m one of

them. It’s good to come down here. Governor, I can’t thank you enough for your leadership and your team’s leadership, and we stand ready to help.

And now I’m going to come around and thank every one of you for working. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Situation in Georgia

September 3, 2008

Last month, Russia invaded a sovereign neighbor and violated Georgia’s territorial integrity. The people of Georgia withstood the assault from the Russian military, and the international community rallied to stand with the people of Georgia and their democratically elected Government.

Early in the crisis, I directed a series of steps to demonstrate America’s solidarity with Georgia, including instructing Secretary Gates to oversee a mission by the U.S. military to provide humanitarian aid for the people of Georgia. Since the conflict began, our Nation has provided nearly \$30 million in humanitarian assistance to Georgia, including more than 1,200 tons of food and other relief supplies delivered by the U.S. military. While that mission continues, the United States is also prepared to help Georgia rebuild and regain its position as one of the world’s fastest growing economies.

On Monday, September 1, European leaders announced that the European Union is prepared to provide aid for reconstruction in Georgia, including the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and would soon convene an international conference to assist Georgia in its reconstruction. The United States applauds the actions taken by the European Union, and we will participate in the EU’s reconstruction conference.